

00923

1972/02/22

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

The President
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
John H. Holdridge, NSC Staff
Winston Lord, NSC Staff

Prime Minister Chou En-lai
Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs
Chang Wen-chin, Director of Western Europe,
North American, and Australasian Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Wang Hai-jung, Deputy Director of Protocol
Chao Chi-hua, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Chi Chao-chu, Interpreter
T'ang Wen-sheng, Interpreter
Two Notetakers

DATE & TIME: Tuesday, February 22, 1972 - 2:10 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

PLACE: Great Hall of the People, Peking

(The meeting opened with an exchange of pleasantries between Prime Minister Chou and President Nixon. The Prime Minister remarked that none of those on the U.S. side smoked. He said that Madame Mao would attend the ballet that evening and noted that it was difficult to combine classical ballet with revolutionary themes. The President noted that the Prime Minister had been an actor in his youth, and that he himself had met Mrs. Nixon while acting in a play in which he did not get the girl. The Prime Minister commented that the play therefore did not match reality.

The Prime Minister confirmed that the room in which the meeting was being held -- the Fukien Room -- was the same one in which he had entertained Dr. Kissinger in 1971 and had the duck lunch. Dr. Kissinger related he had gained two pounds his first trip to Peking and five pounds his second.)

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

CLASSIFIED

Sect. 3.6

462, D059404052 8-6-96

NARA, Date 1-21-99
LN 94-10/18

SANITIZED COPY

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958

NO 4/10

to conflict or for the U.S. to occupy Chinese territory, even though on philosophy our two sides differ and we have the slogan, "Down with U.S. Imperialism." Chairman Mao mentioned this yesterday that it is just 'empty cannon.' Dr. Kissinger knows the phrase.

Dr. Kissinger: The Vice Minister knows it now too.

Prime Minister Chou: And Mr. Bush. But even despite that Malik and the Soviet Union are cursing us, saying that there is a synchronized duet between the U.S. and the PRC.

President Nixon: Let me interrupt to pay a compliment to the Vice Minister. The most effective thing he did was at one point when Malik talked, he just smiled at him. That drove him nuts. (Prime Minister Chou laughs)

Prime Minister Chou: You saw that on T.V.? So you have that advantage over us. We didn't see it here. On these matters we are still backward and we admit our backwardness. We don't have the idea we're number one in the world. One thing Chairman Mao constantly teaches us is that once one thinks one is number one under heaven one is bound to suffer defeat. Because no matter what people or what nation, that people and that nation are bound to have shortcomings. Similarly, that people and that country are bound to have strong points. Dr. Kissinger has said that Vietnam, although a small country, has a great people. Only in this way can one have a sense of reality.

So proceeding from these considerations, if one country tries to gain superiority over another merely through expansion of armaments, there will be no end to it.

You're in a very important position vis-a-vis that question. You have said you have no intention to dominate the world, nor have you any territorial designs. You want to see peace in the world and first of all see a relaxation of tensions. We believe that this indeed reflects a genuine desire of your people.

But as to whether the U.S. will completely revert to isolationism, I don't think that is possible, because the times have changed and are no longer

the times of the beginning of the twentieth century. Speaking quite candidly, so-called isolationism these days is not real isolationism but merely a desire to see that other countries don't meddle in the affairs of the Americas. Mr. President, you are quite right when you said that the Chinese people couldn't understand either the Monroe Doctrine or the Open Door Policy.

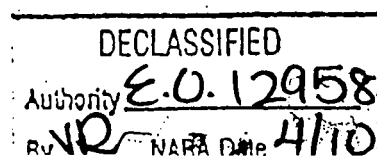
The question is now of great importance not only to Sino-American relations but to the future of the world. Since neither China nor the U.S. has any territorial ambitions on the other and neither side wishes to dominate the other, and what is more, each wants to make some contribution to the relaxation of tensions in the world, then we should see to it first of all where there is a possibility for relaxation of tensions in the Far East. Because we are not in a position to look into the possibility of other parts of the world; they are too far away from us. If we were to do that, it would only give rise to new troubles. Our help to the African people is only a very small part of our efforts. So we will only talk about the situation around us, and the crucial question then is the question of Indochina.

On this question, only the Indochinese people themselves have the right to speak, to negotiate with you. But as the Indochinese area is of concern to us we should have the right to raise our voice on that matter. What's more we have the obligation to give the Indochinese peoples assistance and support. I said this to Dr. Kissinger on a number of occasions.

Since the U.S. had decided to withdraw all of its forces from Vietnam and the whole of Indochina, and the U.S. would like to see the region more or less neutral, that is to say, non-aligned, with no particular force occupying that region, then if that is the President's policy and that of your Government, I think it would be better to take more bold action. Otherwise, you would only facilitate the Soviets in furthering their influence there. As for us, we are not afraid of that eventuality because whatever our help to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, we have never asked for special privileges, and we have never interfered in their internal affairs.

We have not even looked at their different ideology. For example, Prince Sihanouk's ideology is Buddhist and we respect him. The ideology of Vietnam,

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~



too, may not necessarily be completely the same as ours, but we have never interfered in their ideology.

So in this sense the later you withdraw from Indochina, the more you'll be in a passive position, and although your interests is to bring about an honorable conclusion of the war, the result would be to the contrary. You admitted that General DeGaulle acted wisely when he withdrew from Algeria. In fact, General DeGaulle even withdrew more than two million European inhabitants from Algeria, an action which we didn't dare to envision, and to have withdrawn in such a short space of time. And General DeGaulle encountered great opposition at home. But maybe because he was a soldier his life might actually be different from that of yours, Mr. President. I know Mr. President appreciated Mr. Patton. Of course, you didn't appreciate his desire to attack Russia, but you appreciated him for his daring and for his doing what he thought was right.

Maybe these words of mine are superfluous in trying to persuade you, Mr. President, but I want to make my views clear. It is easier for us to discuss other matters. I appreciate that on this matter we don't see eye to eye. As Dr. Kissinger told us, on this our attitude is even stronger than Vietnam.

Dr. Kissinger: Than the Soviet Union.

Prime Minister Chou: It's clear what they say doesn't count. I believe it is possible for you to take bolder action, and you would only gain a better feeling. Because if peace can be brought about in that region at an earlier date, then you'll be able to maintain more influence there.

The French have something else in mind. The French are thinking to bring the U.S. and the Soviet Union together in some form of international conference for detente. But that would not do. You don't approve either?

President Nixon: I think that is a moot question.

Prime Minister Chou: When I consider the form of the Geneva Agreements, my conclusion is that this was a mistake.

President Nixon: 1954?

Prime Minister Chou: Yes. At that time we were taken in by agreeing to sign. The result for you was that the U.S. was drawn into a quagmire. At that time, President Eisenhower brought about the end of the Korean

War - quite a courageous action of President Eisenhower. But President Eisenhower didn't expect that Dulles would lead him into the morass of Indochina, and have the America sink in it.

How is it conceivable that a country could enter into an agreement and not sign? You said you would live up to the agreements, but actually disturbed them. The result was the elections that were supposed to take place two years afterwards were not realized, and if they had been held, even without international supervision it goes without saying that Ho Chi Minh would have been elected throughout the country. He was a very old friend of mine - I knew him in France in 1922. If Ho Chi Minh had led the whole of Vietnam, then relations between the whole of Vietnam and the U.S. could not have deteriorated, and may have been much better.

But history twists and turns, just like the history of our two countries, in which after twenty-two years we are meeting again. That's history, and there are many examples of this. But if the U.S. Government would take a very bold move in Indochina you would gain very good feelings on the part of the Indochinese people. As to how to resolve this issue I can't say, since we do not take part in the negotiations nor do we want to take part. Our position is that so long as you are continuing your Vietnamization, Laoization, and Cambodianization policy, and they continue fighting, we can do nothing but to continue to support them.

But I would like, Mr. President, to take note of the fact that our policies of assistance to the countries of Indochina, that is Vietnam and other peoples of Indochina, differ from that regarding Korea. Why did we send the Chinese peoples volunteers during the Korean War? Because Truman compelled us. He sent the Seventh Fleet in to the Taiwan Straits so that it wasn't possible for us to recover Taiwan. What was more, his troops pressed straight toward the boundary of the Yalu River, and we declared at that time that if the American forces pressed toward the Yalu River, although China was newly liberated, we could not stand idly by. So when Truman's forces came to the Yalu River, we had to show that what even we say counts. We couldn't be sure, though, that we would win, because the Soviets were not willing to send forces. You are quite clear about that.

The end result was that when President Eisenhower took office, he realized the war should be brought to an end. But the loss of lives and material losses you suffered in Korea is incomparably less than in Vietnam. No one expected that. Rather than spending so much effort in a war of contention in such a localized area, you should adopt a most courageous attitude and withdraw when you should.

The Taiwan question can be discussed rather easily. For example, the five point program you mentioned was told to us by General Haig on instructions from the President, and the President reiterated it just now. We have already waited over twenty years - I am very frank here - and can wait a few more years. I can go a step further. Even when Taiwan comes back to the Motherland, we will not establish any nuclear bases there. Mr. President knows more about it than I. What use is there to establish nuclear bases in a place like that? Only the Soviets continue to hold four islands north of Japan. They will either hang on or maybe sell. What's more, their condition for a peace treaty with Japan is that Hokkaido cannot be defended. We can tell Mr. President in advance, and also Japan, that when Taiwan returns to the Motherland we will not establish bases there. What use are they? We have no desire to send one single soldier abroad. We have no design on the territory of others. So why establish bases there? Our purpose is merely self-defense.

The most pressing question now is Indochina, which the whole world is watching. So in making your present visit, the Democratic Party tried to put you on the spot on this question by alleging that you came to China to settle Vietnam. Of course this is not possible. We are not in a position to settle it in talks. Of course, we can have an exchange of views on the matter in which we can proceed from a relaxation of tensions in the Far East and proceed in the interest of relaxation of tensions throughout the world. As Mr. President didn't say much on this, I would like to hear your views. Possibly Mr. President has different views on these questions. As for the other questions, we can discuss them tomorrow. I would like to hear your views (on this) now.

President Nixon: On Vietnam?

Prime Minister Chou: Indochina as a whole.

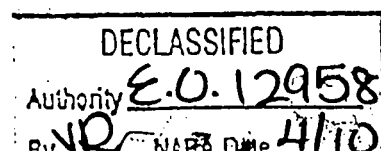
President Nixon: Mr. Prime Minister, the problem of Vietnam is one that no longer should divide us. The Prime Minister has suggested that if we could move more quickly this would be a wise, and as he points out, courageous thing to do. This is a possibility which we have considered, but is one on balance which we feel we must reject.

Let's look in terms of how quickly we are moving. We now have less than 100,000. We have already removed our forces to less than 100,000, and in mid-April I will make another announcement regarding reduction of forces. We therefore would be at a point where we are only talking about two or three more months before the American role, insofar as our presence in Vietnam is concerned, will be finished, unless, of course, the problem of our prisoners is still outstanding. The difficulty we now confront is not simply ending American involvement by the withdrawal of our forces, which is now a foregone conclusion and only a matter of a few months, but the difficulty now is the question of bringing peace to the whole of Indochina, including Laos and Cambodia. That is why we believe the offer I made in October and reiterated in January is one which should be given serious consideration by the North Vietnamese.

Let me cut away the eight points, five points, and thirteen points, etc. and come right down to what our offer really is. If I were sitting across the table from whoever is the leader of North Vietnam and we could negotiate a ceasefire and the return of our prisoners, all Americans would be withdrawn from Vietnam six months from that day. And let me also point out that while we're willing to settle on that basis, when this was suggested to the North Vietnamese as far back as the middle of last year, they rejected it and always insisted there had to be a settlement in which we had to impose a political settlement as well as to resolve the military side.

I couldn't agree more with the Prime Minister's view, to let the political decision be made by the people of those countries themselves without outside interference. We have already offered that. We have offered to withdraw all Americans, with no "tail" behind - to use the Prime Minister's expression - and to have a ceasefire throughout Indochina

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~



provided we get our prisoners back. Then we would let the decision be made by the people there. But the North Vietnamese insist that we not only make a military settlement, they want us to impose a political future and remove the existing government and impose a government which basically would be one of their choice. That we can't do.

I greatly respect the Prime Minister's views on this subject because this is simply an issue on which the only gainer in having the war continue is the Soviet Union. They want the U.S. tied down. They, of course, want to get more and more influence in North Vietnam as a result. From all the intelligence we get they - should we say - may even be egging on the North Vietnamese to hold out and not settle.

I should also say that we realize we may not reach agreement on this, and who knows whose right? We think we are right. As the Prime Minister knows, I have great respect for General DeGaulle's resolution of the terribly difficult and wrenching Algerian experience. But what happened between France and Algeria only affected France and Algeria. France is a great country, but France at this time is no longer a world power.

If the U.S. were not only to get out of Vietnam - which we are going to do through the policy of Vietnamization in a few months in any event - but get out and at the same time join those who have been our enemies to overthrow those who have been our allies, the U.S. would in my view, perhaps be permanently destroyed insofar as being a country which any other nation could depend upon.

I realize there are views to the contrary, but when a nation is in a position the U.S. is in, where around the world, in Europe for instance, there are nations that depend on the U.S.A. for their defense, if the U.S. does not behave honorably - and I don't believe dying for honor is enough - if the U.S. does not behave honorably, the U.S. would cease to be a nation to have as a friend and which the people of the world could depend upon as an ally.

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
DATE 4/10

The point that the Prime Minister has raised here is one which neither of us is going to convince the other, and I respect his point of view. I hope he can understand our policy is one which is truly designed to bring about an end of the war, not only for the people of Vietnam but for all of Southeast Asia as quickly as possible. I think it is very important for the Prime Minister to know this, because I don't want to leave any false impressions: the negotiating track is open, and as I indicated, we are willing to negotiate a settlement on military issues alone, if they are willing, to negotiate a general political settlement in which Thieu would resign and an impartial commission would run the elections. If, in answer to our proposals, North Vietnam chooses to step up the fighting, I have no choice and the action I take is apt to be very strong. This is my record, and that is what it's going to be so that other nations in the world know that the U.S. will react strongly if tested.

There is also something else very important for North Vietnam to consider. When we talk about Vietnamization, that's the longer road. It does envisage the withdrawal of U.S. forces over a period of time, months, but on the other hand, if we are talking about total withdrawal, no residual force, that is something they are going to have to negotiate about - we're not just going to walk out of there without an agreement.

I should point out also that there are no American forces in Cambodia and no American forces in Laos. It's true that in relation to our policy in Vietnam we've found it necessary to use U.S. air action against North Vietnamese forces in both countries. If North Vietnam would withdraw its forces from Cambodia and Laos at least the war would end for those two countries, and let the people determine their own future.

The U.S. is prepared, just in conclusion, to provide a very heavy economic assistance to Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam for rehabilitation, and to South Vietnam in the event a settlement is made. We don't want to leave a tail behind. We don't want bases. And we would accept the idea the Prime Minister referred to as a neutralized area. On the other hand, it takes two to make a deal.

We really feel if our offer were seriously studied, it would be seen that we have gone very far indeed to settle military issues only and let historical processes decide or settle military and political matters in which the issue would be taken to the South Vietnamese; we would hope there would be

elections. Here the situation would be very different from 1954 because here we would guarantee the elections and they would be supervised by an impartial body set up and guaranteed by outside powers.

The Prime Minister is very perceptive to note that some of my political opponents have created the impression that I am coming to see the Prime Minister in order to settle the war in Vietnam. (Prime Minister Chou laughs). Let me say I want him to know in all candor that we, of course, would welcome any moves, any influence to get negotiations, We don't expect anything, however, and if we cannot get any assistance we understand. We shall proceed to deal with North Vietnam in the way I have suggested. This will be a longer and harder road for them, much harder than for us. There is the shorter road of negotiations if they prefer.

Prime Minister Chou: Probably it is not easy for us to make these things very clear quickly. I have discussed this matter with Dr. Kissinger on many occasions. We can only remain in a position of supporting them and not speaking on their behalf. I understand the joint communique has been discussed?

President Nixon: Yes, I believe the communique draft is in very good order.

This (Vietnam) is one of the ironic situations where the U.S. will be equally damned by both the People's Republic and the Soviet Union. (Prime Minister Chou laughs)

Dr. Kissinger: Except the People's Republic wants the war to end and the Soviet Union wants the war to continue.

President Nixon: Yes.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes.

The President: We can be very honest in this conversation. I understand the Prime Minister's position. We noted the Prime Minister's comments before coming and know that this is an irritant in our relations. I want to assure the Prime Minister I am removing this irritant as fast as anyone in my position could. My predecessor sent in 500,000 men into Vietnam, and I've taken 500,000 out. I will end American involvement -- it's a matter of time. I can speak with certainty on this point. All we are

really talking about is whether we can hasten the process, not by our moving out in a precipitant way, but by agreement.

We can - if I can put it quite directly - we will withdraw, we are withdrawing, but what we cannot do - and we believe this very strongly - we cannot remove the government of South Vietnam and in effect turn over the government to the North Vietnamese. That we cannot do. We believe they can have a fair chance to do it through what we regard as a fair election. But we are not going to withdraw and go one step further and remove the government of South Vietnam and turn it over to North Vietnam. That we cannot do. The U.S. then would be a nation which would, in my opinion, deserve nothing but contempt before the people and nations of the world, whatever their philosophies.

Prime Minister Chou: That is still your old saying - you don't want to cast aside old friends. But you have already cast aside many old friends. Of these, some might be good friends and some might be bad friends, but you should choose your friends carefully. (PM Chou laughs). That again is a question of philosophy. For example, Mr. President, you asked me yesterday if Chiang Kai-shek was an old friend, and I said he was even an older friend of ours than yours. I cooperated with Chiang Kai-shek once. I also quarreled with him and fought against him. Chiang Kai-shek still believes in one China. That's a good point which we can make use of. That's why we can say that this question can be settled comparatively easily.

As for Vietnam, you went there by accident. Why not give this up? Vietnam is different from Korea because Korea was indeed divided into North and South by the results of the war. According to the terms the Soviet forces went north and you went south. I don't recall whether this was a result of the Potsdam Agreement or what. It would be beneficial for the relaxation of tensions in the Far East to bring about a nonaligned Southeast Asia.

The President: I believe that will eventually happen. It is a question of...

Prime Minister Chou: You have this confidence? But if the Soviet Union goes in and you two big powers contend there, then there can be no talk of relaxation. The American government made public that reason when you increased your military expenditures. Now you have realized that we pose no threat to you, and as for us, you have no reason to believe that we have territorial designs in Southeast Asia.

The President: We have no designs on the territory of Southeast Asia either.

Prime Minister Chou: But you are tied down by the South Vietnamese regime. Actually that regime has nothing to do with your former treaties. You worked it out with Bao Dai. But according to the Dulles method you had Bao Dai represented by Diem.

The President: Bao Dai was out hunting lions.

Prime Minister Chou: Then you worked with Diem and his brother. He and his brother went to see God. These fellows are not reliable. If the U.S. really wants to create a good impression in the world, you don't need these so-called friends. You may say that if you withdraw your influence from the area a vacuum is created and the Soviet Union will fill it up. The fact is, the later you move out, the more serious the contention there, and another Middle East will develop. Then that will be another extension of tension from the Mediterranean to the Middle East to the Indian Ocean to the Subcontinent to Southeast Asia to the South China Sea.

If the war in Indochina continues we will, of course, continue our aid to them because what we say counts, but we will not get involved unless, of course, you attack us. So tensions will continue there and, under those circumstances, how can you talk about a relaxation of tensions? When I first met Dr. Kissinger he said you wanted relaxation of tension. You must start somewhere.

The situation in Japan is different from Southeast Asia. That's another matter.

The President: If I may interrupt. Before the Prime Minister goes on to that subject, I would only add that we have our proposal on the table now at Paris, and will continue to press it. We believe it is a fair proposition, and we think it would be in the interest of the relaxation of tension and very helpful if the North Vietnamese were to finally negotiate. I don't ask the Prime Minister to do anything about it, and certainly not do anything about it publicly. I would simply say we want a relaxation of tension. We don't want bases.

This is quite different from what I am sure the Prime Minister is going to say about Japan.

Prime Minister Chou: Let us conclude our discussion today. We still have to have dinner before going to the performance tonight.

The President: I want to say to the Prime Minister that I very much appreciated his frankness on these issues. Of course, I have tried on my part to give him my feeling of my own viewson these issues. I believe that this kind of discussion these next few days will show that where great issues are involved our interests will bring us together. That is why I believe we can find understandings which will be very important for the rest of the world.

Prime Minister Chou: At least on issues which are important for the Far East.

The President: Yes.

Just as a historic note - who can be a prophet these days? - I think that looking ahead for the next twenty-five years, peace in the Pacific is going to be the key to peace in the world, there being a relative balance in Europe. The Middle East is a candidate (PM Chou laughs). But, I believe the Pacific is the key, and that is why our meetings are so important for the whole world.

Prime Minister Chou: When you say a generation, does that mean twenty-five years maybe?

The President: I am using it in the sense that we are one generation since World War II and in that period we in the U.S. have had two wars, in Korea and Vietnam. I'm not so presumptuous as to look beyond twenty-five years - if I can see twenty-five years ahead, that is as far ahead as I can see. And also, Mr. Prime Minister, I have often referred to the fact that every generation of Americans in this century has experienced wars - World War I, for the first generation; World War II, for the second generation; Korea in the 1950s; and Vietnam in the 1960s. I think four wars in a century is enough. (PM Chou laughs).

Prime Minister Chou: It should be so. That's why we also think there should be a way to solve armaments expansion.

The President: This is one subject I would like to take up at a later meeting. One reason we are pursuing the matter with the Soviet Union on limits to arms is that we believe a breakthrough in this area is essential if we are going to avoid an arms race.

Prime Minister Chou: Too much money has been spent on it. Our posterities will condemn us for such huge wastes.

President Nixon: Yes.

Prime Minister Chou: That is why we say we are only in the first stage. We don't want to spend too much money. You probably took note of this.

President Nixon: Yes.

Prime Minister Chou: We say that in a very honest way. We don't wish to expand.

The President: I understand. In terms of world peace, I would say that a strong China is in the interests of world peace at this point. I don't mean to suggest that China should change its policy and become a superpower. But a strong China can help provide the balance of power in this key part of the world - that is desperately needed. Then, too, I have a selfish reason - if China could become a second superpower, the US could reduce its own armaments. (PM Chou laughs).

Prime Minister Chou: You have too much confidence in us. We don't want to.

We can meet again tomorrow at 2:00 p.m.

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By VR NARA Date 4/10